

SCHOOL BOARDS

Mr. President, finally, I want to say this about a memorandum by the Attorney General, Merrick Garland, that Senator MCCONNELL referred to earlier. He suggested that we are going after parents, that we want to somehow harass, intimidate, and arrest parents who are appearing before school boards.

I went back to read this memorandum. It is very explicit.

Those who engage in violent conduct at school board meetings are going to be stopped. They are violating the law, and they are violating the spirit of those meetings where communities come together and decide the fate and future of public education.

I think the Attorney General is right, we should have safety in that environment, just as we demand it here on the floor of the U.S. Senate—nothing more and nothing less.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

INFLATION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, as I begin this morning, let me just start by reacting to a couple of things that have been said here on the floor this morning already by my Democrat colleagues.

You know, the leader, Republican leader, when he was down here earlier, talked about the impact of inflation on the economy, and I have to tell you, that is very real. The inflationary impact is being felt all across this country. Energy costs are up, gasoline costs are up by huge amounts. Food costs are up in this country. Housing costs are up.

There isn't hardly any area of our economy where people aren't being impacted by inflation, meaning that the dollars that they earn are stretching less all the time. That is not a fake thing; it is not a temporary thing; it is a real thing. People are experiencing it in their economic lives on a daily basis, and to hear the Democratic leader say, well, you know, all the spending they are going to do is not going to cost anything, that it is going to be covered by tax increases and those tax increases are just going to hit people in the higher income categories, also is something that just isn't accurate.

Now let me just for a minute suggest something that I think is sort of fundamental when it comes to economics, and that is, when you have too many dollars chasing too few goods, you get inflation. The demand for a product goes up, and when the demand goes up, the price usually follows along with it.

Well, we have right now a lot of government dollars that have been swirling around the economy for some time, which is why I think in many respects we are seeing this inflation—the highest inflation that we have seen literally in 30 years in this country, affecting, as I said earlier, kind of all sectors of the economy and things that people have to purchase in their daily lives.

If you put more dollars out there, which is what is being talked about by our Democratic colleagues—another \$3.5 trillion that would flood the economy—I think the expectation is a very real one that you are going to see that inflationary pressure accelerate, intensify, because when you have that much money, that many dollars chasing too few goods, inflation is an inevitable result. The idea that we need to spend another \$3.5 trillion and that somehow that is going to be a solution right now also is not consistent at all with the facts and the data.

We saw here just recently the Congressional Budget Office come out with a report that suggested that government revenues are at the highest level—biggest increase, I should say, year over year since 1977. We are now over \$4 trillion this last year in revenues—\$4 trillion. It has never happened before in this country. It is the biggest 1-year increase in revenues since 1977, paid for largely by corporate tax receipts, which were up 75 percent year over year, and also by individual income tax receipts, much of which was coming from high-income earners. A lot of that increase that we have seen in income tax receipts in this country in government revenues comes from those people who are high-income earners.

All that to say, if you have that much revenue coming in to the government in this country, why, then, would you need to go out and raise taxes even more and spend even more when you have an economy that is in the process of recovering and people concerned about inflation? And the Democrats' solution to that is to spend more, put more money out there, and raise taxes even higher at a time when you have historic revenue coming in to the Federal Government. It is the first time ever—ever—in our Nation's history that we have had over \$4 trillion in revenue come in.

The other thing that was mentioned by my colleague from Illinois just a minute ago is that the issue of the tax gap, which was alluded to earlier this morning on the floor by, again, the Republican leader—the Democratic solution is to go after people, essentially shake them down, and get them to pay more in taxes.

I am not suggesting for a minute that there aren't people out there who aren't paying the taxes that they should under the law and that the law needs to be enforced. What I am suggesting is that in the effort to close that so-called tax gap, there are huge differences of opinion about what effect that would have, how much could be generated, and who is ultimately going to pay for that.

Well, now there is additional research out coming from the Joint Committee on Taxation that, in fact, the Democratic efforts to close the tax gap will hit lower income taxpayers the most.

To say that none of the tax increases or none of the tax policies that are

being proposed by the Democrats in their \$3.5 trillion tax-and-spending spree proposal won't harm people who are making less than \$400,000 a year is laughable under any—any—plausible review of these tax policies and proposals, but this one in particular hits hardest at low-income taxpayers.

According to the Joint Committee on Taxation, people making less than \$50,000 a year will pay anywhere from 40 to 57 percent off all the revenue that is generated off of that one proposal. People making less than \$100,000 a year will pay somewhere between 65 and 78 percent of all the taxes that are generated under that particular proposal in the Democratic plan. People making less than \$200,000 a year would pay up to 90 percent of the amount generated under that particular proposal in the Democrats' plan. So people making less than \$200,000 a year are going to be paying tens of billions of dollars more in taxes just on that one proposal which is out there, allowing the IRS essentially to snoop into people's personal transactions up to the \$600 level. I don't think there is any way you can get around the fact that under that scenario, people in the lower income categories are going to end up paying the lion's share of the cost of that.

So this isn't going to be without cost. This isn't going to be without consequence. This is not going to be without impact on lower income taxpayers in this country. They are going to get hit and they are going to get hit hard under this Democratic proposal.

So when we talk about it, we are talking about real impacts, real economic impacts on the American people's lives. And we are going to continue to do everything we can to fight against really bad tax policies being put in place to finance massive amounts of spending, expansion, and growth of government at a time when government revenues just hit a historic high; never seen before; biggest year-over-year increase in revenue since 1977. And Democrats want to raise taxes—taxes—on everybody, including those in the lower income categories.

BORDER CRISIS

Mr. President, the Biden border crisis continues unabated. In August, U.S. Customs and Border Protection encountered 208,887 people attempting to illegally cross our southern border, a 318-percent increase from August of 2020. Now, for context, that number is bigger than the population of Sioux Falls, SD, the largest city in my home State.

At this point, "crisis" is too mild of a description. Things at the border are out of control, and there is little to suggest that things will improve anytime soon as the Biden administration continues to permit an influx of migrant entries and has sought to install appointees who have lax views about enforcing our immigration laws.

In yet another sign of how bad things are, dozens of National Guard members from South Dakota recently deployed

to our southern border. I know these South Dakotans are always ready to serve wherever and whenever they are needed, and I am grateful for their service.

You would think that the border crisis would be at the top of the Democrats' priority list here in Washington, DC, particularly when they have to call in the National Guard from States around this country, but you would be wrong. In fact, the border crisis seems like barely a blip on the Democrats' radar, and it is not the only crisis they are ignoring.

Our national security situation is taking a giant step backward with the President's disastrous Afghanistan withdrawal and the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan. Here at home, inflation is becoming a serious and a long-term, not a temporary, problem. Americans' purchasing power is shrinking as they have to stretch their paychecks to cover increases in everything from the price of groceries to the high price of gasoline.

But none of that really seems to matter to Democrats. Their main priority seems to be forcing through a \$3.5 trillion partisan tax-and-spending spree that would permanently expand the reach of government into Americans' lives.

Where to start when it comes to Democrats' tax-and-spending spree? Well, there are tax hikes that would put American businesses at a disadvantage on the global stage and shrink jobs and opportunities for American workers. There is a death tax expansion that could put a lot of family farms and businesses in jeopardy. There are the major new entitlements—free college, free preschool, subsidized daycare, paid leave. Yes, one of the major existing entitlement programs, Medicare, is rapidly heading toward insolvency. Yet, instead of shoring up that program, Democrats are expanding entitlements and putting the government on the hook for an unsustainable level of spending.

Then there are items that get less attention, but they are just as troubling. Traditionally in the United States, individuals have picked the winners and losers through the free market, but the more you insert government into economic and family life, the more government ends up being the one making the decisions. Government ends up picking the winners and the losers.

Take the Democrats' childcare benefit. A 2020 Bipartisan Policy Center survey found that among working families who used center-based childcare, 53 percent used a faith-based center—53 percent. But now Democrats are coming in with their childcare subsidies and in the process changing decades-old childcare funding programs to favor secular childcare providers who provide care at daycare centers. So if you are one of the 53 percent who chooses a faith-based provider for your child, you could be out of luck, not because you changed your childcare preferences but

simply because Democrats have set up their benefit to favor secular center-based childcare providers.

Democrats are repeating this pattern of picking winners and losers throughout their bill. Labor unions win under this bill. Democrats have included a special benefit that would expressly allow union members to deduct their union dues on their taxes. Meanwhile, nonunion workers can expect to pay their usual tax bills. You only get special privileges if you are a union member. If you are one of the 90 percent of American workers who don't belong to a union, then you are not going to see say help as they subsidize the dues of those who do belong to a union. I guess Democrats want to make sure that they get those union votes to come out at election time.

Of course, that is not the bill's only benefit for unions. There is funding for electronic voting systems for union elections and incentives to purchase an electric car from a union factory.

Unions, of course, are not the only winner. Electric vehicle manufacturers, for one, also win. The bill clearly endorses electric vehicles as the—the—climate change solution for the transportation sector. Other clean energy technologies—notably, biofuels—take a back seat in this bill.

I could go on all day when it comes to the spending priorities in this bill, like the fact that the bill dedicates more than \$200 million—\$200 million—to urban agriculture. That is right—urban agriculture. I am not saying that you can't have a garden if you live in a city, but urban gardens are never going to produce the volume of food needed to feed our country, and anyone who thinks they will doesn't know much about agriculture, which may be the problem here.

Democrats' tax-and-spending spree reads like the product of too much socialist daydreaming and not enough time spent learning about how things like agriculture, energy, and economies actually work. Speaking of which, I haven't mentioned the Democrats' tree equity measure—yes, tree equity. Democrats have allowed \$3 billion prioritized for what they recently referred to and have been referring to as tree equity. Now, I support and encourage planting trees, but I don't think the Federal Government can afford to spend \$3 billion on tree equity, especially when Democrats are planning to spend \$200 million—yes, \$200 million—for a park in House Speaker PELOSI's district that features luxury housing and a golf course and provide tax benefits for Ivy League universities and other well-funded colleges, including a new tax credit for higher education institutions for teaching “environmental justice” programs.

Then there are the tax credits for electric bicycles—bicycles that can cost up to \$8,000. It may be just me, but if you can afford an \$8,000 bicycle, I am not sure you need a tax credit for it from the Federal Government.

Then, of course, Democrats are planning to provide billions of dollars to fund a Civilian Climate Corps to provide government jobs for climate activists and \$20 billion for the creation of a National Climate Bank to fund Democrats' pet environmental projects.

Now, as you can see, this list goes on and on and on. The more you read the Democrats' bill with its massive expansion of government and historic tax hikes and its payoffs to liberal constituencies, the more you realize that there is pretty much no area of life the Democrats think wouldn't be better run by the Federal Government.

But my fellow Republicans and I still believe in a vibrant, private economy, and in the right of individuals and families to run their lives as they see fit. So we will continue to oppose Democrats' social spending spree, and continue to fight to secure a future of prosperity, opportunity, and freedom—freedom—for each and every American.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I and Senator CORNYN be able to complete our remarks prior to the vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I just want my colleagues to know that the Senate Appropriations Committee, yesterday, released nine appropriations bills. They allocate important resources and they help to address the pressing priorities of America's families and communities, but they also promote U.S. national security.

For more than a decade, this country has underinvested in our children, in our infrastructure, in science, and in public health. Frankly, that means we underinvested in our future.

These bills include historic increases to educate our Nation's children, to combat climate change, promote affordable housing, and improve healthcare. I am proud of the work of the committee in producing these bills, and I commend each of the subcommittee chairs for their commitment to America's future.

Now, the bills comply with the topline spending allocation contained in the fiscal year 2022 budget resolution passed by both the House and the Senate earlier this year.

So you combine this with the three bills reported from the Appropriations Committee in August, the bills provide a 13-percent increase for nondefense discretionary programs and a 5-percent increase for defense programs compared to what fiscal year 2021 enacted.

The 5-percent increase for defense programs, that is consistent with the National Defense Authorization Act, NDAA, which was reported by the Senate Armed Services Committee on an overwhelming bipartisan vote, and it passed the House last month again with overwhelming bipartisan support.